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**Mamdani: New-Aged Mayoral-
Elect's Reimagining of New York**

By

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4 December 2025

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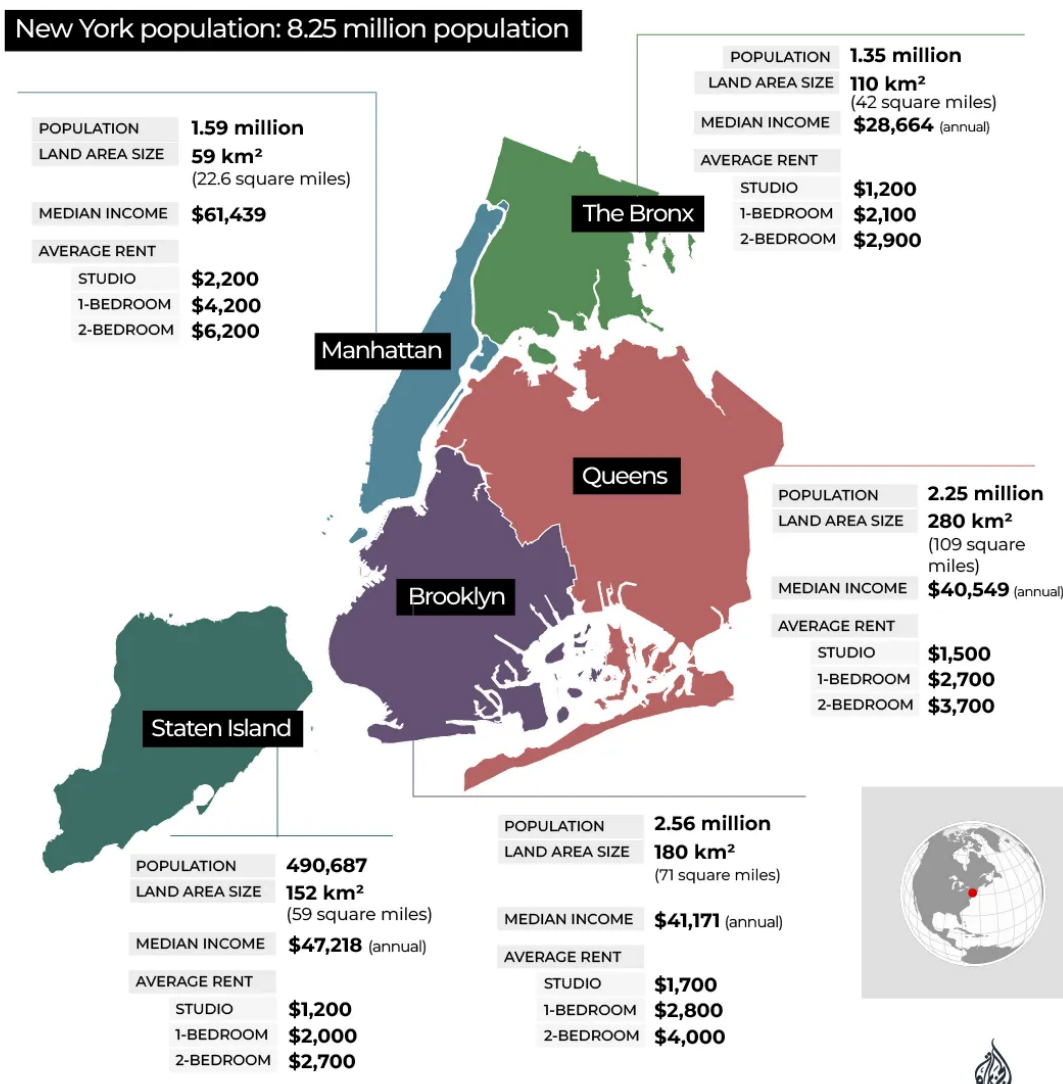
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Executive Summary

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- ✦ The victory of Zohran Mamdani for the new mayor of New York City was historic in many regards. His popularity amongst everyday New Yorkers resonates strongly compared to the political elite.
- ✦ Several of his program initiatives are progressive and quite ambitious, requiring the restructuring of New York's financial and political dynamics to secure funding.
- ✦ Being the center of global financial and diplomatic hubs, New York's history of progressive politics has the potential to inspire transnational and global change, similar to the shift from the Gilded Age to the Progressive Era.
- ✦ Signature proposals in the Mamdani platform program will be costly, and he faces wide opposition. But, if successful, his policies could improve the physical, mental, and financial well-being of millions.

Key Picture: New York City at a Glance



Source: NYC.gov (2024) on [ALjazeera](#), October 2025

1. Background

On 04 November, in a major upset with establishment politicians, Zohran Mamdani won the New York City mayoral election. His win is historic in several aspects. Not only will he be the youngest person to serve as mayor since the 1800s, but he will also be the city's first mayor born in an African country, first Muslim mayor, and first South Asian mayor. He ran as a Democratic Socialist and member of the Democratic Socialists of America, garnering over 50% of the votes and far outpacing his opponents, including former governor Andrew Cuomo.

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Mamadani's win signifies a push to progressivism that will now begin to take hold in official offices. Core pillars of his platform included making all city buses free, rent freezes on rent-stabilized apartments, tripling the production of affordable homes, and providing free and high-quality childcare for children up to five years old. To achieve this, he advocates for higher income taxes on millionaires and increased corporate taxes to fund his plans.

Mamdani won simply because (1) he engaged people in genuine conversations to understand why they voted the way they did or why they opted out of civic participation, and (2) he ran on a platform that resonated with the people who would be voting for him, not that of special interests or lobbying forces. Despite overwhelming popularity for his proposals by New Yorkers, Mamdani also garnered resentment from Democratic and Republican politicians.

His platform reverberated across political strongholds as he sought to tackle everyday affordability and economic inequality issues. However, now that he's been elected, Mamdani is faced with devising a plan to pay for his ambitious campaign promises and taking responsibility for the outcome.

2. New York's New Outlook

Mamadani's "New York, For All of Us" slogan moves beyond reformist ideas of his predecessors and re-imagines the modern New York. Being the most ambitious socialist program in modern American history, Mamdani's platform pillars included¹:

1. Acquiring 200,000 units of permanently affordable, city-owned social housing over a decade.
2. Creating a network of city-owned grocery stores to keep prices low and eliminate the need to pay rent or property taxes.
3. Providing baby baskets for 125,000 in-need families.
4. Increasing investment into public schools and renovating 500 public schools with renewable energy infrastructure, HVAC upgrades, and a reintroduction of green spaces.
5. Raising the minimum wage to \$30/hr by 2030 (current: \$16.50/hr)².
6. Increasing funding for small business support by 500%, cutting small business fines in half, and expediting permitting via easier online application processing.

These key ambitions, amongst others, will require a sound de-commodification of essential goods and a fundamental restructuring of the city's power and economic dynamics. His promises coincide with recent upticks of demarketization and decommodification trends, which are central to democratic socialist ideals in the U.S.³

Mamdani's victory was met with rejoice across New York and around the world. His appeal to the everyday New Yorkers brought together people of all walks of life, encouraging some who had never voted before to place their ballot and believe that their voice mattered once again.⁴

Moreover, his policy positions inspired those who once believed in the progressive era for New York and that an elected official representative would represent them. The mayoral-elect's historic win carries the hope of New Yorkers looking to oppose a Trump agenda, but revitalize a progressive one.

2.1. Revival of New York Progressivism

Mamdani, with his diverse background and the principles he promoted on the campaign trail, has reinvigorated New Yorkers. One year ago, Mamdani was on the streets of New York, asking locals whether they had voted in the general election and why they had voted for those politicians. What seemed like a resounding preference for President Trump, Mamdani earnestly engaged locals about their decision, never accosting them nor pushing his agenda if deemed unwanted. After hearing their reasoning, he then detailed his platform.⁵ Now victorious, Mamdani captures the spirit of New Yorkers and embeds their needs in his platform, reinvigorating progressivism in New York's political sphere.

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New York City has a history of aligning with progressive political aspirations. The Progressive Era lasted from the early 1900s to the 1920s, preceding the Gilded Age (1870s to early 1900s) - an era notable for its superficial prosperity to cover deep social problems, political corruption, and exploitation of the working class. The Gilded Age was also defined by rapid technological innovation, debilitating wealth disparity, and uninhabitable working conditions - sentiments that echo in today's political battles.⁶

New York played a crucial role in the push for progressive policies across the U.S. during these decades, and still today. Stymied by scandal after scandal, many lost faith in the political system's ability to bring about change - they lost faith in a renewed New York's progressive era.

The resurgence of political progressivism in New York began in the past decade with the election of Mayor Bill de Blasio in 2013. His election and achievements, such as securing the tax-supported universal pre-kindergarten,⁷ influenced a generation of new hopefuls. Others, like Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in 2018 and Governor Kathy Hochul in 2022, have reverberated progressive attitudes across the nation.

New York, being the center of the global financial and diplomatic hub, remains a significant incubator of national policy, economic, and social developments. Mamdani's win intrinsically inspires a potential push for progressive policies at the municipal, state, national, and even global levels.

3. Impact

Progressive policies invoke disparate reactions. On one side, they are welcomed as they are set to create social safety nets, establish government regulations and oversight, and expand democratic rights. Attitudes against progressivism are rooted in ideological and practical concerns, underpinned by a difference in understanding the role of government in everyday lives, disillusionment of individualistic principles that are the cornerstone of American culture, naivety, and uncompromising economic constraints that juxtapose unfettered capitalism. Estrangement between the two extremes, unwilling to compromise, will perpetuate a fragmented and unclear vision for New York and the U.S., and possibly further confuse diplomatic missions.

3.1. Economy

Government involvement is core to achieving progressive goals. Intervention is believed to correct market failures, ensure fair labor practices, and address inequalities. Key pillars of Mamdani's platform propose plans to do just that and accommodate the rising cost of living.

3.1.1 Public Grocery Stores

Publicly-owned grocery stores are commonplace in the U.S., especially for military personnel and in some rural communities. Big cities are now exploring the idea, especially as it could alleviate suffering in food-insecure communities. Supermarket redlining creates food deserts in urban neighbourhoods and food swamps of

unhealthy food options in New York’s Black and Hispanic localities. Mamdani’s pledge of \$60M to support grocery pilot programs will counter the 25% rise in food prices (since 2019)⁸, increase the average of fruits and vegetable intake in New York’s poorest boroughs, and reduce grocery costs by 15% to 25% (when also compared to low-cost competitors).⁹

3.1.2 Free Bus Transit

Free public transit can enhance the lives of low-income New Yorkers. Mamdani’s proposal would replace bus fares with increased taxes on the city’s corporate tax rate to 11.5% and raise taxes to 2% for wealthy earners, costing upwards of \$800M annually.¹⁰ Though ambitious, previous experiments sought to determine whether fare-free transit could improve life outcomes.

A 2019 experiment conducted in King County in Washington State saw the impact of a reduced fare. It reports a usage surge of the public transit option, positive impacts on employment rates and earnings, and a 1.5 percentage point drop in financial crime-related arrests. Short-term improvements in financial well-being were also documented, including lower debts (by nearly \$100 over the course of the study) and an average of a 13-point jump in credit scores.¹¹

Another successful pilot provided discounted bus fares for low-income New Yorkers. Mamdani mentioned this pilot and its takeaways, including a “ridership increase of 30% on weekdays and 38% on weekends, roughly 12% of riders were new to the routes, and a decrease of nearly 40% of physical and verbal attacks on bus operators”.¹² Thus, Mamdani’s ambitious proposal is costly, but the improved human physical, mental, and financial health outcomes may outweigh affordability concerns - or rather, who will actually be paying for it.

3.1.3 Rent Stabilization Freezes

Rent stabilization could have immediate positive impacts for current tenants. Mamdani’s proposal to freeze two million rent-stabilized apartments is controversial. Proponents of the initiative cite housing affordability and stability while preventing evictions and mitigating stress associated with housing insecurity.¹³

Meanwhile, economists express concerns that freezing rents will not address housing scarcity problems, squatting, and disincentives to revamp communities and surrounding properties. Fortune’s report addresses Mamdani’s proposal as a “Band-Aid policy in a broken market”, citing that the proposal pushes accountability wayward, but understanding market dynamics is key to increasing housing supply and affordability.¹⁴

Figure 1: Percentage of Households Below the True Cost of Living by Location (NYC)

BOROUGH	2012	2016	2019	2021
New York City (total)	42%	40%	36%	50%
The Bronx	56%	56%	52%	65%
Northwest Brooklyn	29%	31%	22%	35%
Brooklyn (Excluding Northwest)	49%	45%	40%	53%
North Manhattan	45%	44%	39%	57%
South Manhattan	27%	28%	23%	36%
Queens	43%	38%	34%	49%
Staten Island	29%	28%	26%	37%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012, 2016, 2019, 2021 ACS 1-Year, Public Use Microdata

3.2. Society

Being that New York is resoundingly progressive and a majority voted for the Democratic Socialist candidate, New York is ready for social changes. In recent years, New York has continued to place fourth for the highest cost of living in the U.S. Residents pay upwards of \$50K annually in daily necessary costs like housing and transportation. The uptick has resulted in 56% of recorded outbound migration¹⁵ and brain drain.

The Center for New York City Affairs reports that availing resources, reducing costs for necessities, supporting the economically distressed, and setting a targeted policy response will lessen economic security gaps between what households need and average annual earnings (before taxes).¹⁶ These policy positions could lead to reduced economic hardship, increased innovation and talent retention, stimulated consumer spending, and more stable and diverse population growth. And, if successful, they provide a blueprint for the nation to improve the quality of life for citizens who are plagued by similar duress as New Yorkers.

4. Conclusion

Mamdani's historic win is symbolic, denoting modern progressivism to tackle a contemporary Gilded Age. He represents the hope and aspirations of everyday New Yorkers, and American citizens, who feel blocked from economic security. His ambitious platform has the potential to trigger transformational change across New York, influence national progressivism, and inspire global economic viability.

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